

June 30, 2020 phone request from Daily Hampshire GazetteL

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Annie Thompson <anniethompson@northhampton-k12.us>

Jul 15,
2020,
7:53 PM

to Greta

Here is the letter from Amy to the SC and NHS admin.

Lori Vaillancourt
Northampton High School Principal

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Amy Martyn** <amartyn99@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Mar 10, 2020 at 9:24 AM

Subject: Community requests regarding recent death of NHS student & district schools' climate

To: John Provost <jprovost@northhampton-k12.us>, Lori Vaillancourt <lorivaillancourt@northhampton-k12.us>, Susan Voss <svoss@northhampton-k12.us>, <mayor@northhamptonma.gov>, <rgold@northhampton-k12.us>, <rebeccabusansky@northhampton-k12.us>, Laura Fallon <lfallon@northhampton-k12.us>, <dlevi@northhampton-k12.us>, <lonniekaufman@northhampton-k12.us>, <kgoelman@northhampton-k12.us>, <eserafy-cox@northhampton-k12.us>, <scondon@northhampton-k12.us>

Cc: <ksheridan@northhampton-k12.us>, <cmalvezzi@northhampton-k12.us>, <sgaer@riversidecc.org>, Patricia Loomis <tricialoomis@hotmail.com>, Tonja Santos <tonjasantos@hotmail.com>, Amy Waldman <amywaldman99@gmail.com>, Elizabeth Horn <elhorn@mindspring.com>, Jane Fleishman <jane.fleishman@gmail.com>, Joan Tabachnick <joantab@gmail.com>, Carol Ostiguy-Finneran <schmarol@gmail.com>, Pam Schwartz <pschwartz77@gmail.com>, <lisahallq@gmail.com>, Katie Craig Mead <katie.craig11@gmail.com>, Beth Maurer <bethmaurer4@icloud.com>, Marc Lussier <[mj.lussier@gmail.com](mailto:mjlussier@gmail.com)>, <c.jonesmonahan@gmail.com>, <dldenenfeld@gmail.com>, Jenny Bender <jennybinhbender@gmail.com>

Dear Superintendent Provost, Principal Vaillancourt and members of the School Committee,

We are a group of concerned district parents, caregivers and residents who feel strongly that the high school needs to do more to help the entire school community cope with the tragedy of Navaya Molina's death. The magnitude of this loss is deeply felt by some and will be for a long time to come. There is nobody who is not affected in some way. Those not as directly touched are learning about how a community can engage during hard times, as well as how to offer support to those who are more deeply affected.

We have further concerns about the district's overall approach to social emotional learning/teaching, including teaching about racism and sexism, and how they are intertwined with bullying, harassment and abuse. We recognize that these are systemic issues; we want to learn about the district's policies and approach and are interested in supporting more robust district-wide plans. We are aware of REAL's recent letter to the district that raises similar concerns and hope there can be a coordinated effort between all stakeholders in Northampton.

Regarding Navaya's death, we appreciate that this is a very difficult time for staff and faculty as well, and that there may be legal and ethical issues of which we're not aware. Some of us have learned that you are getting support and guidance from Riverside Trauma Center, and Sarah Gaer in particular, and we commend you for getting professional help for such a traumatic event. (We have cc'd Sarah on this letter.)

While the high school's approach is to largely assist students individually this is not a way to help everyone in the school community heal. We have seen this move to largely individual responses at other times of crisis in the district and continue to feel strongly that this response is part of what is perpetuating a culture in which harms are done, rather than building community resilience and compassion.

We have heard an assumption articulated several times that it would be wrong, or problematic, to gather the school all together to mark this sad time, and to offer support and comfort together as a community. We have heard the concern that students who did not know Navaya will be burdened or harmed in some way by a gathering of this kind. Several of us have articulated to various administrative staff that we strongly disagree with this assumption and in fact believe that everyone is harmed by minimizing the impact this loss has on the entire school community. Further, every caregiver and student we have talked with has either expressed puzzlement that the school is not doing more, that students are largely being asked to return to normal routines without a more full recognition of the loss the community is enduring, or they have shared stronger feelings of disappointment that the school community is not being pulled together to mourn, and confusion about what the school is actually doing or not doing.

What we are requesting:

- **A school-wide service held during school hours.** Of course no one should be required to attend and for anyone who does not want to go, there should be alternative activities offered. Obviously this needs to be professionally planned and facilitated.
 - We share the concerns we believe you have about both "contagion," (students engaging in suicidal behavior) as well as the privacy of the Molina family. But the details of Navaya's death do not have to be mentioned at all in order to honor her life as a NHS student.

- Many students will not be able to attend an event if it's held outside of school hours, due to family, extracurricular or work commitments. No one should face these barriers. Additionally, the school sends a strong message of caring by making this part of the school day: "This is important to our community."
- We have heard from some students that the NHS administration is not willing to do group events like this, but that if students want to organize them, the administration will support their efforts. We think it is wrong to expect students to be able to identify and meet their own needs at a time of tragedy and that the administration needs to lead here.

• **Support groups offered to all students**, for smaller numbers of students, to address the needs of those who need more than one large group gathering, due to anything Navaya's death brings up for them. We recognize there may be needs beyond the scope of these groups and the leaders of the groups will need to be ready to screen and support/make referrals for those needs.

• **Share information to all district caregivers about plans:**

- Detail all the efforts the school has made (since many will be unaware of what was in The Bulletin, or on the website, or may not have heard either of the two related robocalls).
- This should include what support there has been for faculty and staff and what for students.
- What next steps the district will take over time. Review of an existing crisis response policy? Development of one? Review/development of crisis communication plan? A debrief for faculty/staff? A survey of students about their needs and input on the school climate? A survey of caregivers on the same?
- In order to ensure that the most people possible, receive this information, it would be best shared in a letter to all caregivers with notice about the letter also broadcast widely in all media the school uses, including email if possible, and all social media accounts. It is hard to get everyone's attention these days and sustained notice in many media is important.
- Looking at the bigger picture, we would also like to know what the district and NHS's plans are around enhancing social learning curriculum and addressing bias and bullying in our school community. This would include teaching about racism and sexism, and how they are intertwined with bullying, harassment and abuse. We would like to see the district's plans to strengthen and deepen social emotional learning in all schools, including
 - Training for staff, faculty, and students on bullying, harassment and abuse and
 - How systemic problems like racism, sexism, classism (and other oppressive behaviors) contribute to heightening hurtful interpersonal behavior.

• **Sending strong and consistent messages that bullying and violence will not be tolerated at NHS:**

- We would like the administration to address the student body as a whole with the message that the school will take strong and swift action when fights happen, threats are made, and when a student is bullied.
- There are likely students experiencing bullying at school, who may not feel safe. In order to create an environment where students can learn, our belief is that students must often hear the message that they will be safe while at school.

- NHS needs to strengthen its approach to bullying.
- **A meeting between representatives of the group signing this letter with district representatives to discuss our concerns.**

We are sure you have many plans of your own; we see some addressed as goals in the JFK school improvement plan from 2018-2019 and perhaps the more current NHS SIP has these as well (it's not posted on the district's website that we could see). We know you are taking this loss very seriously. We appreciate your attention to our letter and look forward to a detailed response.

Sincerely,

Amy Martyn, parent to NHS student
Tricia Loomis, parent to JSS student and former JFK student
Tonja Santos, parent to JSS student and former JFK student
Dorian Gregory, Northampton resident, aunt to NHS student
Kol Goodstein, Northampton resident, aunt to NHS student
Nini Melvin, Northampton resident, aunt to NHS student
Heidi Haas, LICSW and parent to district graduates
Lindsay Sabadosa, parent to a JFK student
Noel Raley, parent to JFK and NHS students
Jo Comerford, parent to JFK students
Amy Waldman, parent to NHS student, LICSW

Sheilah Bolger, parents to a NHS student
Dave Tischler, parents to a NHS student
Amy Altwarg, parent to JFK and NHS students
Tom Schiff, EdD, parent to JFK and NHS students
Katie Craig, parent to JSS, JFK and NHS students
Ellen Frank, parent of a NHS student
Liz Friedman, GPS Group Peer Support LLC, parent to NHS
Peter Kassis, Northampton resident and parent to NHS student
Melysa Friedman, LICSW, Northampton resident and parent to a NHS student
Stefanie Krantz, Esq., Northampton resident and parent to a NHS student
Charlotte Capogna-Amias, Northampton resident and JSS parent
Laurel Turk, mentor to NHS student
Susan Molano, LICSW, parent of Ryan Road student
Rev. Dr. Andrea Ayvazian, resident of Northampton and parent of a NHS graduate
Jenny Bender, parent to JFK students
Lisa Hall, concerned citizen of Northampton
Richard and Janet Getler, Northampton residents, grandparents of a recent suicide victim
Barbara Cheney, resident of Northampton and parent to a NHS student
Rebecca Leopold, resident of Northampton and aunt of NHS student
Pamela Schwartz, resident of Northampton and parent to 3 district school grads
Joan Tabachnick, parent of two NHS graduates and SASH Advisor
Jane Fleishman, parent of two NHS graduates and SASH Advisor
Sarah Buttenwieser, Northampton resident and parent to three former NHS students
Helen Kahn, resident of Northampton and parent to 2 NHS students
Dorrie Brooks, resident of Northampton and parent to 2 NHS students

Deborah Cohen, M.Ed., concerned town resident
Josh Mechem, parent to JFK students
Suzanne Harris, JFK grandparent
Jen Bernache, parent to current and graduated NHS students
Kristen Elde, parent to Leeds student
Ray Sylvester, parent to Leeds student
Josh Silver, parent to JSS students
Nunia Mafi Silver, parent to JSS students
Keegan Pyle, parent to current and former NHS student and former JFK student
Tom Hilbrink, parent to Leeds students
Sue Holmberg, parent to Leeds students
Jocelyn Jones, parent to NHS and JFK students
Regine Specter, parent of JSS and JFK students
Kate Kruckemeyer, JFK and NHS parent
Val Nelson Taylor, Northampton resident and former K-12 health educator
Becky Lockwood, LCSW, parent of NHS student
Lynn Yannis, Northampton resident
John Maher, Northampton resident
Carol Ostiguy-Finneran, parent to JSS and NHS students
Ben Ostiguy-Finneran, parent to JSS and NHS students
Danielle Denenfeld, parent of a child in NPS, teacher in a neighboring district
Christine Jones-Monahan, JFK parent and JFK School Council member
Marc Lussier, JSS parent and JSS School Council member
Colleen Kellogg, parent to NHS student
Kate Godin, parent of a student at NHS and JFK
Lori Schwartz, Northampton resident and aunt to NHS student
Chris Van Camp, Northampton resident and uncle to NHS student
Joe Golossi, JSS parent
Nicole Walsh, JSS parent and JSS Council Member
Betsy Young, JFK and NPS parent
Tracey Levy, JSS parent
Ben James, JFK parent
Danica Phelps, RR parent
Mike Stiles, NPS parent
Libby Arny, grandparent of NHS student
Liz Horn, JFK and NHS parent
Jean Zimmer, NHS parent
Carole Collins, NHS parent
April Yvon, RR parent
Trish Malone, NHS parent
Katrina Beaumier, NHS parent
Vanessa Rodriguez, NHS parent
Risa Silverman, parent to NHS graduate
Katharine Daube, parent to NHS students
Tolley Jones, NHS parent
Thea Hardigg, parent to NHS student and NHS PTO member
Beth Maurer, parent to 2 NHS & 2 JSS students, and one future NPS student
Angie Stone, NHS parent

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*Annie Thompson
School Committee Clerk & Assistant To The Superintendent
Northampton Public Schools
(413)587-1327*

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Greta Jochem <gjochem@gazettenet.com>

Jul 15,
2020,
8:21 PM

to me

Thanks, Annie. I appreciate it.

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